

**IN THE SPECIFICATION**

*Kindly amend the specification as follows:*

**Page 2, paragraph at lines 12-18:**

In either case, known modular products for distributed I/O applications are sometimes found to be sub-optimal for particular installations. When the distributed I/O system has a finite number of slots available to receive an I/O module, the number of slots can sometimes ~~be~~ insufficient. In the case where the backplane is constructed as and when the I/O modules are interconnected, the physical size of the I/O system can become undesirably large and can exceed the available mounting space on the machine being controlled and/or in an enclosure.

**Page 10, line 27 – Page 11, line 9 (paragraph spanning pages 10 and 11):**

Regardless of the protocol by which the wireless backplane link 118W is implemented for wireless (tether-free) communication of backplane data between the master and servant devices 170m,170s, the data transfer protocol implemented on the wired backplane sections 118A,118B is also implemented on the wireless backplane link 118W via encapsulation so that the wireless link is completely transparent. As shown in FIG. 5A, the hard-wired backplane sections 118A,118B are used to transfer data to and from according to any suitable known protocol such as, e.g., DeviceNet, ControlNet, POINTBus, etc. The wireless master device 170m and the wireless servant device 170s comprise respective encapsulation/decapsulation modules 174m,174s that encapsulate data received from and decapsulate data to be transmitted to the hard-wired backplane sections 118A,118W. In this manner, the wireless backplane link 118W behaves identically to a backplane extender cable such as that shown at ~~118E~~ 18E in FIG. 4.